

Michigan Women

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Status of Women in Michigan

The *Status of Michigan Women at the County Level* was released by the Michigan Women's Commission and the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation in June 2005. The complete study, with a two-page summary for each of Michigan's 83 counties, is available at www.michigan.gov/mdcr. The county study uses the same categories as used by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) reports on *The Status of Women in the States* and *The Status of Women in Michigan*. (www.iwpr.org) The study's methodology is described in *The Status*

of Women in your County: A Community Research Tool, developed by IWPR and sponsored by the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation.

The information from the county-level study has provided us with a wealth of information in various areas: demographics, political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights and health and well-being. As we know, women make up 50 percent of the nation's population. Only a few Michigan counties have less than a 50 percent

female population.

Political participation

Political participation is the area where women are least represented in Michigan counties. Women make up about 50 percent of the population, but most county commissions have fewer than 50 percent of women serving as commissioners. Women are not represented in proportion to the percentage of female residents in their county. 18 counties have no women commissioners on their county commission. Even the largest counties, Oakland and Wayne,

can only boast 24 and 40 percent representation, respectively, on their county commission. Only one county and one city, Ingham and Detroit, have women's commissions. Local commissions provide important education and advocacy at the local government level, increasing women's political participation.

Michigan women vote in larger numbers than men. A full 70 percent of Michigan women were registered to vote in the last general election. When it came time to cast our ballots, only 60 percent of

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Status of Women in Michigan

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women in the state actually voted. There is a disparity between counties in the number of women who vote. In Ionia and Branch counties, only 30 or 40 percent of women voted. In other counties, such as Leelanau, almost 70 percent of women voted.

Employment and earnings

Using 2000 data, an examination of employment and earnings data reveal inequities. When the ratio of women's earnings to men's earning for the state is examined, the average is 67 cents for every dollar a man makes. The county picture is more complex. Antrim has the lowest wages per dollar at 37 cents for every dollar a man earns. Over 50 percent of women in Antrim county participate in the labor force. On the other end of the spectrum, Ogemaw women earn 98 cents for every dollar a man makes. The average salary for a woman in Michigan is \$30,000. In some counties, however, men's average income is \$45,000 a year compared to a women's \$30,000. The lowest earnings for women, \$20,000 as the median income, occur in 11 counties.

Health and well-being

Heart disease remains the biggest killer of women in every county, ahead of lung disease, breast cancer, and suicide. For the state as a whole, heart disease death rates are 255 per 100,000 women. The highest rate is 660 deaths per 100,000 in Ontonagon. The lowest rate is 92 per 100,000 in Keweenaw.

Ninety percent of Michigan women have health insurance. This statistic includes coverage provided through Medicaid and Medicare. The depth of coverage and costs of these health care plans are not known, so we can't be assured that those 90 percent have adequate coverage.

Prenatal care in the first trimester is good in the state. 85% of first-time mothers in Michigan receive prenatal care. Lake County has the lowest percentage of women receiving prenatal care in the first trimester, however, at 65 percent.

Reproductive rights

Of the 83 counties in the state, 59 percent of counties provided coverage of contraceptives as part of the county employee insurance benefit. 35 percent did not provide coverage of contraceptives, 4 percent of counties did not know whether contraceptives were covered, and Branch and Gogebic county staff refused to answer the survey question. The state does not require coverage of contraceptives in either private or public employee health insurance programs.

County level information is important because Michigan is a very diverse state that includes large metropolitan areas and rural farming communities. In order to make balanced and accurate recommendations for the state, it is important to understand the different issues facing each county and region. This report

will enable people in local communities to set their own priorities in order to make changes to improve the quality of life for Michigan women.

We want to especially thank the three interns, Mary Riggs, Lily Davidson and Bethany Andorfer, for their work in collecting the data.

Please note that the World Economic Forum released a study, *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap*,

in May 2005. The report ranks Sweden and other Northern European Countries as the best in terms of women's empowerment, as measured by the same indicators used in the IWPR studies. The United States (17), Switzerland (34), Japan (38), Brazil (51) and Turkey (57) are doing less well. The report is available at http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gender_gap.pdf.

LEGISLATION – Access to Contraceptives

Senators Martha Scott (D, Highland Park) and Bev Hammerstrom (R, Temperance) have recently introduced legislation in the Senate to assure that all insurance companies that provide prescription drug coverage also cover contraceptives. Senate Bills 431 and 432 have been assigned to the Senate Health Policy Committee, chaired by Senator Hammerstrom.

Contraceptive equity legislation has passed in some form in 20 states to date. Nearly half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended, and more than half of all unintended pregnancies end in

abortion. Use of contraceptives can help reduce unintended pregnancies. However, many health insurance policies that cover prescription drugs do not cover contraceptives.



“Breaking Traditions” Recognized Nationally

On May 17, the Office of Career and Technical Preparation (OCTP) in the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, selected 29 students from across the state to receive its “Breaking Traditions” Awards. The awards honor individuals in nontraditional programs and provides role models for women and men in nontraditional programs. The award program draws attention to the issues of gender equity and nontraditional programs, builds coalitions between agencies, and contributes to the state’s overall number of students enrolling in nontraditional programs.

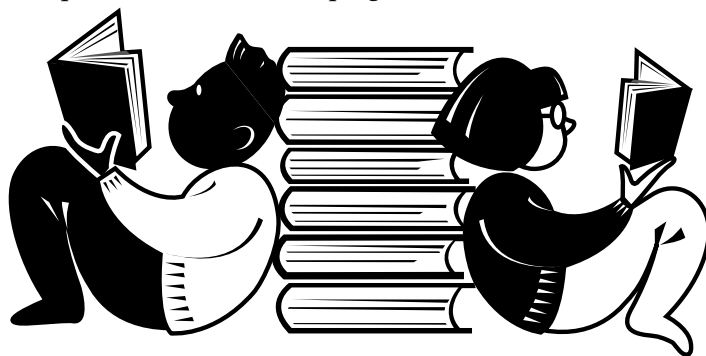
Michigan’s “Breaking Traditions” student award program, developed in 2002, has been recognized nationally by the first annual “Programs That Work: Preparing Students for Nontraditional Careers” Award. Since then, 98 students from around the state have received awards for outstanding achievements in pursuing nontraditional careers for their gender and inspiring others to follow.

The Association for Career and Technical Education, National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium, National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, and National Women’s Law Center created the national award to recognize educational agencies, programs, and schools that have improved students’ access to and completion of career and technical education programs that are nontraditional for their gender.

Michigan’s “Breaking Traditions” program will be recognized at a briefing for the U. S. Congress and the media on Capitol Hill this spring and at upcoming national conferences. Congratulations to OCTP, and Norma Tims, gender equity consultant, who have coordinated programs, services and activities to eliminate gender bias and stereotyping in secondary and community college career and technical education programs.

Gender Equity Program Efforts in K-12 Schools

School districts across the state that operate Career and Technical Education programs are being encouraged to support services designed to promote successful experiences for nontraditional students. These may be activities to recruit, support, or assure retention of nontraditional students in the programs they wish to pursue. “Nontraditional” is defined as occupations or fields of work for which individuals of one gender comprise 25% or less of the individuals employed or enrolled in the field of work. The Office of Career and Technical Preparation (OCTP) monitors the enrollment and completion rates of students in these programs and provides assistance to schools who are struggling to increase enrollment. In addition, OCTP has conducted three statewide summits with nationally known speakers to give educators an overview of the issues of sexual harassment, root causes of gender discrimination and resources available for recruitment. A CD ROM has been developed with photographs of nontraditional students that include persons of color in nontraditional occupations to use in publications. Other resources available include non-biased promotional materials that show nontraditional students; and advice on forming support groups and Gender Equity Advisory Committees at schools and on campuses; and suggestions for hosting career fairs and student tours that focus on nontraditional occupations and public awareness campaigns.



Update on Title IX and Communities for Equity Lawsuit

On May 2, the Michigan Supreme Court ordered the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeal to reconsider the case filed by the Communities for Equity in 1998 under Title IX, the 1972 law that bans gender discrimination in public schools. Prior to that ruling the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit ruled that the Michigan High School Athletic Association’s scheduling of girls’ interscholastic sports during nontraditional seasons violated the right of female student-athletes to equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. (see article in MWC spring 2005 newsletter)

Additionally, in March, the U.S. Department of Education issued a new Title IX policy that allows colleges with intercollegiate varsity sports to gauge female students’ interest in athletics by conducting email surveys of students. Students who fail to respond would be considered uninterested. This new policy changes the previous policy used for the past twenty years that allowed multiple indicators such as interviews with students, coaches, and faculty to assess the athletic interests of the underrepresented sex. Numerous advocacy groups and the NCAA officials are criticizing the new federal guidelines.

Commission News....

On Wednesday, May 18, chairs of the House Oversight Committee, Representative Leon Drolet (R, Clinton Township) and House Appropriations General Government Committee, Representative Daniel Joseph Acciavatti (R, New Baltimore) convened their committees for the purpose of a "Hearing on Michigan



Left to right: Linda Parker, George Wirth, Judy Karandjeff, (MDCR Photo)

Department of Civil Rights, Michigan Civil Rights Commission, and Women's Commission and their involvement in political campaigns." Representative Drolet stated in his May 19 press release, "These agencies demonstrably overstepped their authority both legally and financially when they spent taxpayer funds to influence elections." The Michigan Women's Commission's Executive Director was questioned about the use of state funds when she reported in the Winter 2003 newsletter the unanimous position taken by the Michigan Women's Commission at its October 2003 meeting in opposition to the prospective anti-affirmative action ballot proposal. Representative Drolet stated in his May 19 press release, "...it is fine for the commission or board to inform the public

in an objective manner on relevant issues, but it is illegal to spend public funds to urge the electorate to support or oppose a particular candidate or ballot proposal." There was a great deal of discussion about the role commissions and departments can take in reporting positions of commissions on ballot proposals and whether they have authority to endorse candidates. Linda V. Parker, Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Judy Karandjeff, Executive Director of the Michigan Women's Commission, and George Wirth, Director of Hearings and Mediation in the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, presented testimony and responded to questions. The directors testified that both commissions have the right and responsibility to take positions on ballot proposals and that they are allowed to use state funds to report the position and activities of the commissions. "The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) strongly affirms its legal authority and public duty to educate Michigan residents on civil rights matters in general and on actions taken by the constitutionally empowered Michigan Civil Rights Commission specifically," said Linda V. Parker, Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. On May 19, 2005, Representative Leon Drolet sent a letter to Thomas McTavish, Auditor General, asking him to investigate the activities of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the Michigan Women's Commission. The Office of the Auditor General, a arm of the Legislature, advised MDCR that it will pursue a special audit as requested by Representative Drolet.



On June 9, the Michigan Women's Commission held its fourth public hearing and quarterly meeting in Traverse City. We heard from many people who testified about the problems facing women in northern Michigan, particularly about access to affordable and quality child care and health care. You can access the hearing summary on our web site, www.michigan.gov/mdcr. We thank the people who participated in the hearing.

Guidelines for Sleeping Infants

A new report issued by the Michigan's Children's Cabinet indicates that new guidelines for sleeping infants – if followed – will significantly reduce Michigan's infant mortality rate, state officials said.

"Following these new Safe Sleep guidelines may contradict some traditional family norms, but we are urging parents to follow these new guidelines when putting babies to sleep," said Janet Olszewski, Director of the Michigan Department of Community Health. "These recommendations have been created in partnership with many dedicated health care providers in the interest of preventing another tragic infant loss."

New recommendations from the Infant Safe Sleep Task Force in Michigan now include:

- Babies should always sleep by themselves in a crib, portable crib or bassinet.
- Babies are not safe sleeping with other children, adults or pets.
- Always put baby to sleep on the back.
- Put nothing in the sleep area with the baby – no pillows, blankets, comforters, stuffed animals, or other soft objects.
- Keep baby's face uncovered during sleep for easy breathing.
- Use a sleeper instead of a blanket if possible.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke anything around the baby.
- Be sure not to overheat the baby.
- Dress the baby in as much or as little clothing as you are wearing for the outside temperature.
- Use a firm mattress in the crib with a tightly fitted sheet.



The report, "Infant Safe Sleep," – released by Governor Jennifer Granholm's Children's Cabinet – which includes representatives from the Department of Human Services, Community Health, Labor and Economic Growth, and Education – is available online at www.michigan.gov/mdch.

Michigan has had a higher infant mortality rate than the rest of the United States for many years. Annually, sleep-related infant deaths account for many of the 300 deaths in children aged one month to one year. Michigan saw its first significant decline in sleep-related deaths between 1992 and 1995, due to the state's first "Back-to-Sleep" campaign. In recent years information from death scene reviews shows that many infants die from accidental suffocation, with most having been sleeping in a bed with an adult.

COMMUNITY HEALTH OFFERS GUIDE TO HEALTH PLANS

The Department of Community Health has published a guide to the 15 HMOs that operate the Medicaid system for most participants in the state.

The pamphlet, "A Guide to Michigan Medicaid Health Plans: Quality Check-Up", compares the plans on a

variety of criteria to assist participants in choosing the best plan in their area.

The guide is being provided to new Medicaid recipients and is available on the department's website.

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CALENDAR

July 2, Saturday – Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed

August 26, Friday – Ratification of the 19th amendment providing women the right to vote (www.lwv.org) A celebration is scheduled in Lansing on August 26. A luncheon is scheduled for August 27, hosted by Michigan ERAmerica, call (248) 355-5233.

September 14, Wednesday – MI Women's Commission Meeting, 110 West Michigan, Lansing, 10:00 a.m. – 2 p.m. (www.michigan.gov/mdcr)

September 16, Friday – Celebrate, Educate, Motivate Rally 2005, Rocking the Foundation of Addiction, MI Department of Community Health, Office of Drug Control Policy, Ford Field, Detroit, 12 -2 p.m. Tickets required. (www.michigan.gov/odcp)

October – Domestic Violence Awareness Month (www.ncadv.org) & Breast Cancer Awareness Month (www.cancer.org)

(For more information, see MI Women's Calendar, www.michigan.gov/mdcr)

Mailing List Update

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